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ABSTRACT

This report summarizes the results of a statewide survey of nonreturning freshmen (n=621) at Maryland public 4-year campuses. The former students were asked about the factors that were most instrumental in their departure from their institution, their reaction to their college experience, their likelihood of re-enrolling, and their level of satisfaction with certain campus services. Findings revealed the following items: (1) for black respondents, the top two reasons for not returning to college were academic dismissal and an inability to obtain sufficient financial aid, while white students cited more numerous sets of factors; (2) lack of success in securing adequate financial aid contributed to the departure of substantially more black than white students, and larger numbers of whites left their institution because of a desire for a different academic or social environment; (3) whites were considerably more inclined than blacks to re-enroll in college; (4) most former students, black and white, appeared satisfied with many of the specific services at the college they attended; however, there was considerable dissatisfaction among members of both races with the academic advising, personal counseling, and financial aid they received; and (5) a greater percentage of blacks than whites expressed satisfaction with their overall college experiences. The survey form is included. (GLR)

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NONRETURNING FRESHMEN AT MARYLAND PUBLIC CAMPUSES
Why They Left and What They Thought of Their College Experience

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This report summarizes the results of a statewide survey of nonreturning freshmen at Maryland public four-year campuses. The former students were asked about the factors that were most instrumental in their departure from their institution, their reaction to their college experience, their likelihood of re-enrolling, and their level of satisfaction with certain campus services. An analysis of the responses revealed differences between blacks and whites, and this report reviews the most important of these findings.

Questionnaires were sent to all 2,064 full-time freshmen who enrolled for the first time at a public four-year campus in the State in Fall 1986, but who did not return to their institution the following academic year. A follow-up mailing was conducted to those who did not respond. There were 164 surveys returned as undeliverable. Usable questionnaires were received from 621 former students for a response rate of 33%. Of the respondents who identifed their race, 80% were white, 15% were black, and 5% were members of other minority groups. Blacks were underrepresented in the respondent group; 28% of all nonreturning freshmen in this year were black.

Why They Decided Not to Return to College

An overwhelming majority of the students, 92% of the blacks and 80% of the whites, had initially planned to earn a degree from the college in which they had enrolled in Fall 1986. And more than 90% of the members of both races suggested that they did not achieve the purpose for which they had enrolled. The former students were asked to indicate, from a list of 36 items, the extent to which each was or was not a reason that they did not return to their college. Then, they were asked to identify the one factor that was most responsible for their departure.

For black respondents, the top two reasons for not returning to college were academic dismissal and an inability to obtain sufficient financial aid. White respondents cited a more numerous set of factors.

Nearly one-fourth (23%) of the blacks reported that they had been academically dismissed, and an additional 16% lacked adequate financial assistance. Eleven percent mentioned personal reasons. For white students, the most important factors for not continuing their college education were a change to a major not offered at their campus (9%), personal reasons (9%), academic dismissal (8%), insufficient financial aid (8%), disappointment with scholastic performance (7%), pursuit of some other activity (6%), and displeasure with social life and relationships at their college (6%).

Lack of success in securing adequate financial aid contributed to the deparature of substantially more black than white students. Larger numbers of whites left their institution because of a desire for a different academic or social environment.

Inability to obtain sufficient financial aid was cited as a major reason for dropping out by 37% of the black respondents and just 12% of the whites. However, a greater percentage of whites (28%) than blacks (13%) reported having transferred to another campus which suited them better academically. Smaller class size andgreater personal attention, unhappiness with social life and relationships, and uncertainty about educational or career goals also were mentioned by more white than black respondents as a major reason for their departure from their institution. A fourth of the members of both races indicated that disappointment with their scholastic performance strongly influenced their decision to leave, although a greater percentage of blacks than whites reported having been academically dismissed.

Whites were considerably more inclined than blacks to re-enroll in college.

More than two-thirds of the white respondents were attending another four-year college (42%) or a community college (28%), while less than half of the blacks were enrolled in a four-year (28%) or two-year (20%) institution. However, a greater percentage of blacks indicated that they expected to re-enroll at the particular college they left. About one-third of the blacks reported that they intend to enroll again, most of them within a year. In comparison, just 18% of the whites planned to go back to the campus they originally attended.

How Satisfied They Were with The Campus They Left

The former students were asked to indicate whether they were satisfied or dissatisfied with a variety of services at the college they had attended. Those who had no experience with a service were asked to select the choice, "no basis to judge", and these responses were not included in the analysis.

Most former students, black and white, appeared satisfied with many of the specific services at the college they attended. However, there was considerable dissatisfaction among members of both races with the academic advising, personal counseling and financial aid help they received.

Solid majorities of both black and white respondents expressed satisfaction with admission and registration procedures, help in improving study and academic skills, residence hall facilities and environment, assistance in finding housing, extracurricular programs and activities, opportunities for involvement in clubs and organizations, and medical attention.

However, only 51% of the black respondents and 43% of the whites were pleased with the academic advising they received. Less than half of the members of both races were satisfied with the help they got locating financial aid and with the counseling they received for personal problems. While 55% of the blacks were happy with the career counseling they were offered, only 43% of the whites were pleased.

A greater percentage of blacks than whites expressed satisfaction with their overall college experience.

A majority of the black respondents (52%) indicated that they were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with their experience at the college from which they left, while 34% were dissatisfied. In contrast, there were more white respondents who were dissatisfied (43%) than satisfied (41%) with their experience at the college they had initially attended.

TABLE 1. PERCENTAGE SELECTING CERTAIN FACTORS AS MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR LEAVING COLLEGE

White Students

9% - Changed my major or field to one not offered at the college

9% - Other personal reasons having little or nothing to do with college

8% - Academically dismissed

8% - Unable to obtain sufficient financial aid

7% - Disappointed with my academic performance

6% - Wanted to pursue an activity other than school (a job, military, travel, or informal learning experience)

6% - Displeased with social life and relationships at the college

Black Students

23% - Academically dismissed

16% - Unable to obtain sufficient financial aid

11% - Other personal reasons having little or nothing to do with college

8% - Changed my major or field to one not offered at the college

TABLE 2. PERCENTAGE SELECTING CERTAIN FACTORS AS A MAJOR REASON FOR LEAVING COLLEGE

White Students

28% - Found another school which suited me better academically

28% - Wanted smaller classes where there was an opportunity for greater personal attention

25% - Disappointed with my academic performance

25% - Other personal reasons having little or nothing to do with college

21% - Displeased with social life and relationships at the college

20% - Was uncertain about my educational or career goals

Black Students

37% - Unable to obtain sufficient financial aid

24% - Academically dismissed

24% - Disappointed with my academic performance

24% - Other personal reasons having little or nothing to do with college

TABLE 3. PERCENTAGE SATISFIED WITH SELECTED COLLEGE SERVICES

	Whites	Blacks
Admission procedures	86%	80%
Registration procedures	63%	65%
Academic advising or assistance received	43%	51%
Help in improving study skills or abilities in reading, writing or math	59%	67%
Counseling received for personal problems	47%	47%
Help in obtaining financial aid	43%	44%
Help in obtaining a part-time job	62%	51%
Counseling to help with career planning	43%	55%
Residence hall facilities and environment	58%	67%
Help in finding housing	80%	73%
Extracurricular programs and activities	71%	74%
Opportunities for involvement in campus clubs and organizations	73%	78%
Medical assistance received	80%	85%

NOTE: Respondents who indicated "no basis to judge" were excluded from the analysis for each item.

Survey of Former Freshmen

Please circle one response for each question unless otherwise indicated.

1. We are concerned about the students who enroll in Maryland colleges and universities, and we are interested in learning what happens to students who enroll as freshmen, but who do not return to the same college for their sophomore year. Our records indicate that you were enrolled as a full-time freshman in a Maryland public four-year college during fall 1986, but did not return to the same college in fall 1987. Are our records correct?

1 – Yes, I was enrolled in a Maryland public four-year college in fall 1986, but not enrolled in the same college in fall 1987.
2 – No – *Stop here and return the Survey in the enclosed business reply envelope. Thank you.*

2. What is your current status? *Circle* ***all*** *that apply.*

1 – Attending another four-year college
Name of School: _____
2 – Attending a community or junior college
Name of School: _____
3 – Attending a trade, technical, vocational, or business school
4 – Serving active duty in the military
5 – Working full-time (35 or more hours per week)
6 – Working part-time (less than 35 hours per week)
7 – Unemployed but seeking employment
8 – Unemployed but not seeking employment
9 – Full-time homemaker
10 – Other: _____

3. What is your race or ethnic background?

1 – Black
2 – Native American (American Indian)
3 – Asian
4 – Hispanic
5 – White
6 – Foreign (Non-Resident Alien)
7 – Other

4. What is your sex?

1 – Male
2 – Female

5. What was your age when you enrolled in the college in fall 1986? _____

6. On the average, about how many hours a week were you employed while you were enrolled in the college during fall 1986?

1 – None
2 – Less than 10 hours
3 – 10 to 20 hours
4 – 21 to 30 hours
5 – More than 30 hours

7. Were you a legal resident of the State of Maryland when you first enrolled in the college during fall 1986?

1 – Yes
2 – No

8. What was your marital status when you were enrolled in the college in fall 1986?

1 – Single
2 – Married

9. What was your intended major when you were enrolled at the college in fall 1986?

_____

10. What was your overall high school average?

1 – 90-100 (A)
2 – 80-89 (B)
3 – 70-79 (C)
4 – 60-69 (D)
5 – Below 60 (F)

11. What was your combined math and verbal SAT score?

1 – Above 1000
2 – 800-1000
3 – Below 800

12. What were your educational intentions at the time you enrolled in the college in fall 1986?

1 – I planned to earn a degree from the college
2 – I planned to take courses, then transfer to another college for a degree
3 – I planned to take courses but was not working toward a degree

13. Did you achieve the purpose for which you enrolled at the college?

1 – Yes – *Stop here and return the Survey in the enclosed business reply envelope.*
2 – No

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We would like to know whether you were satisfied or dissatisfied with each of the following services at the college you were enrolled in during fall 1986. If you did not seek assistance with respect to a service, or it was not available at the college, please circle the number under "no basis to judge."

		No Basis to Judge	*Dissatisfied*	*Satisfied*
14.	Admissions Procedures	1	2	3
15.	Registration Procedures	1	2	3
16.	Academic advising or assistance received	1	2	3
17.	Help in improving study skills or abilities in reading, writing or math	1	2	3
18.	Counseling received for personal problems	1	2	3
19.	Help in obtaining financial aid	1	2	3
20.	Help in obtaining a part-time job	1	2	3
21.	Counseling to help with career planning	1	2	3
22.	Residence hall facilities and environment	1	2	3
23	Help in finding housing	1	2	3
24.	Extracurricular programs and activities (social, cultural, recreational)	1	2	3
25.	Opportunities for involvement in campus clubs and student organizations	1	2	3
26.	Medical assistance received	1	2	3

27. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied were you with your experience at the college you were enrolled in during fall 1986?

1 – Very satisfied
2 – Somewhat satisfied
3 – Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
4 – Somewhat dissatisfied
5 – Very dissatisfied

28. Do you expect to enroll again in the college you were enrolled in during fall 1986?

1 – Yes, within a year
2 – Yes, but in more than a year
3 – No
4 – Uncertain

29. What, if anything, could the college you were enrolled in during fall 1986 have done to encourage you to stay enrolled?

We would like to have some information about why you did not return to the college you enrolled in during fall 1986. Indicate the importance each of the following factors was for your decision not to return to the college by circling the number of the response which most clearly reflected your situation.

Major Reason
Minor Reason
Not a Reason

30.	Changed my major or field to one not offered at the college	1 2 3
31.	Found another school which suited me better academically	1 2 3
32.	Dissatisfied with the quality of the content of courses	1 2 3
33.	Wanted a larger number of course offerings in my major	1 2 3
34.	Dissatisfied with academic counseling I received	1 2 3
35.	Academically dismissed	1 2 3
36.	Disappointed with my academic performance	1 2 3
37.	Found courses too difficult	1 2 3
38.	Wanted an academic environment where competition among students was less intense	1 2 3
39.	Wanted smaller classes where there was an opportunity for greater personal attention	1 2 3
40.	Instructors were not available to students outside the classroom	1 2 3
41.	Dissatisfied with the quality of teaching	1 2 3
42.	Closed out of the courses I wanted	1 2 3
43.	Required to take general education courses I didn't want	1 2 3
44.	Required to take remedial courses I didn't want	1 2 3
45.	Unable to obtain sufficient financial aid	1 2 3
46.	Decided to attend a less expensive school	1 2 3
47.	Lost interest in my studies	1 2 3
48.	Was uncertain about my educational or career goals	1 2 3
49.	Doubted the value of obtaining a college degree	1 2 3
50.	Wanted to pursue an activity other than school (a job, military, travel, or informal learning experience)	1 2 3
51.	Marriage or marital intentions	1 2 3
52.	Illness, personal or family	1 2 3
53.	Wanted to attend a school where a friend is attending	1 2 3
54.	Moved from area	1 2 3
55.	Child care responsibilities	1 2 3
56.	Could not work and attend college at the same time	1 2 3
57.	Other personal reasons having little or nothing to do with college	1 2 3
58.	Felt out of place with other students	1 2 3
59.	Displeased with social life and relationships at the college	1 2 3
60.	Disliked certain rules and regulations pertaining to student conduct	1 2 3
61.	Wanted to attend a larger college	1 2 3
62.	Wanted to attend a smaller college	1 2 3
63.	The college was not responsive to student needs, problems and concerns	1 2 3
64.	Disliked the community in which the college is located	1 2 3
65.	Preferred to attend a college where I could live on campus	1 2 3

66. From the previous list, (Questions 30–65) give the number of the factor that was the most important reason for your decision not to return to college. _____